

Moving On by [the_sinnamon_roll_writes](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-08-09

Updated: 2018-08-09

Packaged: 2022-04-23 02:24:36

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,223

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Eleven has some trouble forgetting her past.

Moving On

She was running. She didn't know where she was, or where she was going, only that she had done something wrong. And something was following her. The long hallways were dim and ominous, seemingly endless. She didn't want to know what would happen to her if she got caught. Left, right, on and on in the dark. Right, left, just keep moving through the mud and around the trees. Left- suddenly she realized she was in another world. The hallways had disappeared, leaving her outside in the cold. Still dark, but eerily silent and familiar. The upside down.

"If you find Will..." a voice, seemingly from nowhere, trailed in and out, making it hard to discern exactly what she was meant to do. "... I'm coming for him."

Will. She had to find Will. It was her fault he was lost, she had to focus. There was something else. Someone else. What was her name? It started with a B. Barb? Barbara. Will and Barbara. They were both missing because of her. Focus. Think of Barb, find her, help get her to safety. Images began to appear, shapes scattered along the floor. Bones, animal and human alike, some with meat still attached, others totally stripped clean. Her skin started to crawl when she saw a corpse with enough flesh and matted red hair to recognize.

Barbara.

This was her fault.

Her chest was tight, and it was getting harder and harder to breathe the more she stayed there. Barb was dead because of her. She was dead. Gone. "Gone. Gone!" Her soft whimpers soon grew to shouting, then just wordless screams. She couldn't pull herself out, she was stuck in the upside down with no one, no one but the corpses she had made. She would have to stay and watch them decay, or be eaten, for who-knows how long, all the while knowing she was responsible for it. Her throat was raw, but she couldn't keep herself from wailing. How many people's lives had she impacted? The Holland's, the Byers, Dustin, Lucas. Mike...

Eleven was suddenly shaken awake. She was immediately, almost overwhelmingly aware of her racing heart and damp cheeks, and

then of Jim kneeling down beside her bed.

“Hey, what’s goin’ on here?” he asked quietly, brushing her hair back away from her sweaty forehead soothingly. “You were crying in your sleep. Loud enough to wake me up. This is the third time this month, what’s this about?”

Third time she’d woken him up with it, at least. It hardly seemed like a night went by without being visited by some sort of nightmare. Sometimes she was helplessly watching monsters devour her friends, other times she was still at the lab, being tied down and tested like a lab rat. However, the most recurrent, and the most awful one was when she was trapped in the upside down, and forced to face the harm she had done. That was pure torture. How could she explain that? The thought of his face when she stumbled her way through and explanation was enough to put her off. “N-nothing. I’m okay.” She tried to sound reassuring, but he was having none of it.

“Right, I guess that’s why you woke up screeching in the middle of the night. Come on kid, talk to me. Maybe I can help.”

“No.” Her voice was more firm as she slowly woke up and came to her senses. “I don’t need help. I’m okay.”

“It doesn’t look like you are. You’re pretty run down.”

“Tired. I want to go back to sleep.”

Skepticism radiated from his face as he looked at her. After a moment though, he nodded and stretched his arms up over his head, yawning. “Fine. Do you want me to stay in here with you until you fall asleep again?”

She hesitated for second then nodded back. “Yes.”

It was hard to say if El was asking him to stay to appease him or because she genuinely didn’t want to be alone. Either way, Hopper pulled up the chair that was kept in her room and made himself comfortable beside the bed. Eleven’s hand managed to creep out and hold on to one of Jim’s. She inched towards him until she was holding his forearm as well, regardless of how uncomfortable he was.

For his part, he didn't say anything, only resuming to gently stroking her hair until he was sure that she had fallen back asleep. Then, with a heavy sigh, He slowly pulled his arm free and stood up to go back to bed himself.

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It took Jane a while to get the hang of school. The swarms of other students was overwhelming to her, and she just knew they were all staring right at her. No one stopped to say anything to her. What were they thinking? Did they somehow sense that she was a freak among them? About all the things she'd done? She tried to tell herself that they were just looking because she was new, but questions like those kept popping up against her will.

To top it all off, Mike wasn't even there. Jim- Dad - had said that he'd gotten her in the same classes as Mike, so she would have someone there to support her and to help her keep up with the other kids. But two periods in and there was no sign of Mike anywhere. She didn't see Dustin or Lucas, or even Max for that matter. She was alone, surrounded by strangers. Hopper had instructed her not to use her powers, but it was near impossible to resist with so many people brushing up against her, clipping her shoulders, and pushing her left, right, forward, backward.

By lunchtime, Eleven was more than ready for a break. Rather than go to the cafeteria with all the other kids, she tagged out and went to find an empty classroom to eat her lunch. It was quiet there, and the lights were off. The little light that shone into the room from the hallway was just enough for her to make out what she was eating. Around halfway through her meal, she reached into the backpack Hopper had gotten for her and pulled out the clunky walki-talkie that seemed to take up half the space in her bag. Then she wiggled her jacket off from around her waist and wrapped the sleeves over her eyes.

It only took her a moment to find herself in the pitch black void once more. She had to repress a shudder before she could make herself do what she meant to do. Focus. Mike, Dustin, Lucas. Find them. To her relief, she heard what sounded like Dustin's laugh, right of where she stood.

As she made her way over towards him, the figures started to grow clearer. Dustin, Lucas, and Max were all sitting by each other around a cafeteria table. So they were in the lunchroom. Okay. No way she was going in there.

Where were Mike and Will at? They didn't appear to be with their other friends. She closed her eyes and bought up a picture of Mike in her head, once again focusing hard to find him. Soon enough, she starting to hear sniffles and coughs, this time behind her. She spun around and saw Mike laying in his bed and looking extremely worn out. Luckily he almost always kept his walki-talkie on hand. "Mike?"

He jumped at the sudden noise, but quickly recovered. Snatching up his walki, he hold it up to his mouth and said, "this is Mike, I copy. Who is this?"

"Eleven. Where are you?"

"I'm home sick. I've been throwing up all morning. Why?" She shifted around for a second. Even if he couldn't see her, Mike picked up on her hesitation. "What is it?"

"I'm at the school. It's my first day here and I don't know anyone."

"Wait- seriously? I'm so sorry El, I didn't know. I can't believe I'm missing-" he was cut off when he jerked forward and heaved into a bowl beside him. Jane turned around, in part to give him privacy, part to keep from gagging herself. He managed to regain a semblance of composure again and continued. "What do you mean you don't know anyone? Aren't Dustin and Lucas and Max all there?"

"I haven't seen them in person. I don't think they're in any of my classes."

"Oh yeah, we all have separate classes in the morning. I forgot... why aren't you at least with them at lunch?"

"It's too loud. I started going into the food room-"

"Cafeteria."

"Yes. Cafeteria. There was too many people. They were all pushing

and shouting. I didn't like it." Her answer was short, but predictable. She didn't have much experience being near loud crowds, and the few occasions that she'd had didn't end well. It usually ended in gunfire or accidentally tearing a hole into another dimension. "I don't think they like me."

She was very matter-of-fact about it even though a part of her had to be at least a little upset. "Oh. Where are you now?" He asked, trying to steer away from her last statement. It would be better to talk about that when he was actually in school and could see what exactly she was picking up on from everyone else.

"In a classroom. No one was using it. I haven't seen Will yet either."

"I called him earlier. He's sick too. He still has nightmares that keep him up all night. Not getting enough sleep is really taking its toll on him."

Eleven felt a sting of guilt in her chest. Her fault. She couldn't fix it. If only she could go back and keep him from getting hurt. She would do it in a second. Anything to redeem herself; to mend her mistakes.

"I have to go. I think the bell just rang." In the few hours that she had been there she had realized that the bell was a god to everyone. Despite still jumping whenever it went off, she had to admire the power that little thing held.

"Alright. I swear, I'll be there Monday."

"Bye Mike."

It was only after the walkie had been silent for a moment that Mike looked over to the alarm clock on his bed. 12:22. The bell was supposed to ring in eight minutes. Why had she left then? What could he have mentioned that upset her enough to leave?

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Thankfully Jane had her afternoon classes with friends. Even if they didn't have much of a chance to talk, it was still a huge relief for her to be around some familiar faces. Dustin's smile, Lucas' pat on the shoulder, the teacher's friendly nod were all a welcome relief. She

even waved back at Max when the other girl had waved shyly (in fact, she had warmed up considerably towards Max after seeing her holding hands with Lucas).

They all were sitting around her, and while she wasn't entirely sure why, she didn't complain. It just felt safer that way. She knew at least two boys would be holding a grudge against her, although they likely wouldn't have tried to take her on again. How many stories had people heard? Nerve wracking.

Being surrounded by friends made the entire afternoon much more bearable. After the final bell rang, they all walked together toward the front of the school. The other three kept up a constant chatter, asking her how her first day was, if she had enjoyed herself, et cetera, et cetera. Thankfully they were able to keep the conversation going with her simple answers of "okay," or "it was fine". They reached the front exit and Dustin and Lucas made their way straight towards the bike rack, and Max produced her skateboard, seemingly from nowhere.

"Wait, El, where's your ride?" Lucas asked.

"Dad. I'm supposed to wait here for him."

"Do you mean Hopper? You don't have a bike?"

"No. I don't know how to ride them except on the handle bars."

Dustin scanned the parking lot as they spoke. "I don't see the chief's truck. Do you want us to take you home?"

She hesitated. Home did sound appealing after the day. She wanted nothing more than to just go to her room and rest. She had no way of contacting her dad though, if he wasn't near a radio. How upset would he be if she wasn't there when he arrived? Better to wait. "I should stay here. He'll be here soon."

"We'll wait here with you then, then," Max jumped in. She nudged Lucas then leaned against the bicycle rack. "I don't need to be anywhere soon."

Eleven smiled at the three of them and they all fell back into chatting

jovially.

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After nearly 45 minutes, Jim still hadn't shown up. Despite what Max had said, and despite how much everyone looked to still be enjoying themselves, Jane was feeling anxious. Her friends couldn't stay there all night with her. Where was he? Finally sick of waiting, she interjected, moving the conversation from what cool Christmas plans they had towards what they should do. "We should go. Dad is probably just working late."

"Alright, but it's getting dark El, at least let us give you a ride out that way. Just to be safe."

She nodded, and was just climbing on behind Dustin when Hopper came speeding up in his signature Chevrolet and screeched to a halt beside them. "Hey El- what are you doing?"

"They were going to give me a ride home."

"I thought I told you to wait here for me," Hopper said testily.

Eleven was a bit taken aback by his tone. After all, he had been the one running late, not her. It wasn't her fault, or any of theirs, that he was behind. Irritation bubbled up, and she pursed her lips ever so slightly. "I waited. We all did. It's getting dark, and we all want to go home." Her tone was clipped and matter-of-fact, and she said it all while staring him right in the eye.

He had to admit, she had a point. He'd worked much later than he had meant to. For such a small town, it seemed unusual how many complaints people had. Since the exposure of the (half) truth behind Barbara's death, he had been extra busy dealing with various anxieties. He was getting calls about strange smells, oddly tasting water, a mystery blight ruining a garden. Thankfully, as annoying as they were, it never took him over 10 minutes to solve the problem. A dead raccoon under the porch, mold growing in an unwashed sink, a jealous neighbor sabotaging a prettier yard, all easily explained.

He decided to move on rather than argue with her. "Do any of you

other kids want a ride?”

A chorus of “no’s” and a scramble to get on bikes and skateboard later, Eleven was getting her seat belt buckled and Jim started to head home.

“How was it?” he asked, about halfway there. “Was it fun?”

She shrugged, staring out the window silently.

“What’s that supposed mean?”

“It was good, I guess. There was a lot of people.”

Her less-than enthusiastic tone told him that he wasn’t getting the full truth. “Were they nice? Did you meet anyone cool? What’d you think of the classes?” he prodded, wanting to extract more information from her.

“I liked the classes. The teachers were nice to me. Everyone else ignored me. I don’t think they like me.”

“What? What makes you think that? What about your other friends?”

“Mike and Will weren’t there. I didn’t know anyone in any of my morning classes. Dustin, Lucas, and Max were all in my afternoon classes though.”

They were nearing home, and Hopper was at a bit of a loss as to what to do. He’d never had problems like this in school, and Sarah... Sarah had been too young to start having issues with other kids. The problem could wait, he decided, at least for now. He had the weekend to think of a plan to help her. For now, he would just focus on making her feel better.

“Want some ice cream?” Lame, but it made her brighten up all the same.

“Can I have some? I thought ice cream was for special occasions.”

“Well, you made it through your first day of school! And it’s a Friday night, sometimes rules can get broken on Fridays. And some

Saturdays. Sundays can be fair game too. Or any time I don't want to bake anything for something sweet." He pulled up the driveway to his house and parked right out front.

"Weekends?"

"Yeah! Tell ya what, why don't we go inside and watch some movies. We'll have some junk food for dinner tonight. I'll call for pizza. What kind do you want?"

"I thought you said we were going to start eating restaurant food less. We were going to start fixing healthier meals, right?"

"Oh, you don't want pizza then?" he asked skeptically. "I didn't mean we'd stop eating out forever. Every now and then is alright. We can make something tonight if you want, or we could start eating right tomorrow. I'll leave it up to you."

"Cheese."

There had been no hesitation, and Jim smiled over at her and nodded. As they climbed out of the car and started walking inside, he confirmed, "so cheese for you, pepperoni for me. We'll go inside, you go ahead and get washed up, I'll get it ordered. Alright?"

"Alright." With that, she dashed inside, and was already in the bathroom by the time he got inside.

Time for dinner.

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About halfway through the second movie, they were surrounded by empty pizza boxes and snack wrappers, and Jane had fallen asleep beside Jim on the couch. She was slouched over and had her head resting on his shoulder. How she could sleep like that was beyond him, but he didn't want to bother her. He figured he could just finish off the movie and then just carry her into bed and made no move to wake her.

Until she started hyperventilating. Her breathing was strained, and she was shaking like a leaf. She had been whimpering softly, but it

quickly escalated into panicked cries. It all came over her so fast that Jim barely had time to process the situation before she bolted up right, gasping for air.

Unable to think of what he could do, he put an arm around her shoulder and started to rub her back. As soon as he touched her, she turned around and practically threw herself into Jim's arms, sobbing into his shoulder.

"Hey, woah- what's wrong?" He instinctively shifted his arms so that he could hug her tightly. "Was the movie too scary for you?"

Although he'd been trying to lighten the mood, Jane shook her head, still not capable of speaking without tearing up and crying again. So he settled for just holding her closely and rubbing her back.

It took nearly thirty minutes for her to wind down to just a few sniffles here and there. Even then, he waited until she was finally able to breathe normally before he asked again. "What were you dreaming about, kid?"

That was it. She couldn't keep quiet anymore. It was time to come out and tell Hopper what was going on, and look for help from him. She found herself incapable of meeting his eyes as she started to tell him all about her nightmares. Each one in great detail, while Jim listened patiently until the very end.

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"Joyce, I don't know what to do." Despite the fact that it was the middle of the night and she should have been asleep, Jim was thankful that she answered the phone. He had nearly flown into a panic himself, angry and upset that there seemed to be nothing he could do.

"What happened?"

"It's Jane. You know she's woken up crying in the middle of the night a few times. It's gotten worse. It's almost every night now. And the nightmares she's been having- she told me about them."

"What are they about?" Joyce sounded tired, but concerned. They

were both whispering, in an attempt to let all the young people sleep soundly.

“All kinds of shit. The lab, the demigorgon, the portal, all of it. She’s blaming herself. Joyce, I don’t know how to fix this.”

Silence for a moment, as Joyce chewed her lip anxiously. “This one’s kinda out of my league too, Hop. She’s been through so much, I wouldn’t know where to begin to help her.”

“Come on, hasn’t Will ever had nightmares? He’s seem some pretty messed up shit too. How does he handle it?” he asked, almost desperately.

“Yeah, he does have nightmares. But El has been through so much more than Will has. She’s gonna be hurting inside for a long, long time. Will has been seeing a therapist though, and he’s saying it’s been helping him with a lot.”

Hopper sighed heavily and ran a hand through his hair. “Maybe that’s the right way to go. Do you have any other ideas? At all? Her case isn’t exactly normal. I don’t think many shrinks deal with government conspiracies on this scale so often. And I don’t want anyone trying to patronize her because they don’t believe her. She doesn’t deserve that.”

“I don’t know- but she should be a part of this. It’s her life. At the end of the day, El is the one you need to discuss it with. At least start there. Maybe she just needs some reassurance. Any way you decide, you should talk to her first.”

“Yeah...” Hopper trailed off wearily. “I don’t want to stress her out anymore than she already is. I know this is asking a lot, but Joyce, could you come over and help me? I don’t know what I’m doing here.”

“Of course. Dinner tomorrow night, around six? I’ll bring the boys with me. Between all of us, we should be able to come up with something.”

“Okay. I’ll see you tomorrow then.”

“You sound like you need some rest. Go get some, Jim.”

...

The next day Jim tried to be a little extra nice to Jane. He stayed home from work, made a big breakfast with all of her favorite things, spent nearly half the afternoon reading with her, trading off every few pages as usual until they finished the novel. She was making impressive strides in reading comprehension and loved to dive into new stories. Neither of them bought up the events of the previous night, and if Eleven had heard him talking to Joyce on the phone, she didn't say anything about it.

“So what do you want for dinner tonight? No more pizza, we're eating something relatively healthy. You gonna help me make something? The Byers are coming over, and I don't want to feed them leftovers.”

“Your spaghetti is good,” Eleven offered up. “And I think I could help.”

“What else?”

“What?”

“What else are we gonna serve? We can't feed them just spaghetti, we gotta get some veggies, protein, you know, a decent meal.”

“Pears.” Her immediate response took him by surprise. How she had jumped so quickly to pears? “We should give them pears.”

“Well- yeah, we could slice up a few pears for people. But pears aren't vegetables. You can tell because pears taste good,” he added with a wink when her brow furrowed subtly. “Do you think you could put together a salad? It doesn't need to be fancy. I'll help you figure out what to toss in it, but you can wash them and chop 'em up.”

“Okay.” It was one of the first times she'd worked in a kitchen to make a real meal from scratch, and she was eager to help.

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An hour later dinner was on the table and the Byers were knocking on the door. Jim opened up, stepping aside to welcome them in, noting that there was a third person among the boys. Mike. He patted the boys on their backs, then raised an eyebrow at Joyce. She just smiled and shrugged in a fashion that made it clear she knew what he was communicating. "I know I didn't check, but I thought he could help. They're really close, it can't hurt."

Will and Mike had hurried over to Eleven upon entering the house, while Jonathan held back beside his mother, eyeing them all fondly. Mike was still sounding stuffed up, but he was looking much more rejuvenated than he had been. Both Hopper and Joyce were pleased to see the genuine smiles on every face.

"Good idea. Let's go eat."

Joyce nodded, and she and Jim started to herd the children towards the dining room. No time was wasted before everyone dig into the food and filled their plates. There was little talking for a few minutes, and the sounds of chewing, slurping, and fork against glass were most of what could be heard.

It took less than fifteen minutes for everyone to finish eating, and Jonathan wasted no time in clearing the table and starting to wash the dishes. When Jim started to object, he was just brushed off and ignored.

"It's the least I can do, Hop. You fed us, we can pick up. Right Will?" he asked, elbowing his little brother on the shoulder. Both Will and Mike took the hint and started to assist Jonathan with the clean up.

Eleven made to start helping herself, but was stopped when Joyce placed a gentle hand on her forearm. "Jane. I need to talk to you in private. It's not anything bad honey, you don't need to look so scared. Let's go to the living room for a moment." Joyce's voice was just as soft and kind as always, so Eleven followed behind her with more curiosity than anxiety.

Joyce led her to the far side of the living room, away from the boys, and sat down on the edge of the sofa. Without saying anything, El took a seat beside her and looked over at her expectantly.

“Hopper asked me to talk to you. He mentioned that you’ve been having trouble sleeping lately. Could you tell me why?”

Suddenly shifty, Eleven became interested in the pillows on the couch, and she shook her head no.

“El, honey, it might help to talk about it. You need to be brave and face whatever it is that’s upsetting you, or it’ll just get worse. You can’t deal with it until you acknowledge that.”

Eleven looked up to meet Joyce’s eyes and, over a second of hesitation, nodded. “Nightmares. Almost every night. I can’t stay asleep for too long, or they come back.” She was quiet, but at least she was talking.

“What happens in your nightmares?”

A small shrug and a glance back down at the floor, and Joyce was considering trying to move the conversation along when Eleven answered. And what she did hear broke her heart. Joyce suddenly understood exactly what Jim had been feeling when they talked on the phone.

“Bad things. The lab, the upside down... Will and Barbra. What I put them through.” Her voice had dropped so low that Joyce could barely make out what she was saying.

Absolute helplessness.

It was evident on her face just how deep this went for Eleven. A sort of desolation, the pain of a dozen lifetimes etched into a too-young face. Had her eyes always been so haunted? An hour ago, Joyce wouldn’t have thought that those wide, spirited eyes could have become so tormented.

“Sweetie, none of it was your fault- no, I mean it,” Joyce insisted over Jane’s scoff, “it’s not on you.”

“It wouldn’t have happened without me.” A slight quiver in her voice gave away her distress despite her matter-of-fact words.

“Yes it would have. It all would have happened without you. But, we

wouldn't have made it if it was anyone else." That got her attention, and Joyce ran with it. "Eleven, those men at Hawkins would have done anything to get to through to that place. They would've snatched some other child, and put them through the same things they put you through until they got the same results. But they stole you. They took someone who was strong enough, and brave enough to come back and save everyone. That wouldn't have happened without you."

Jane opened and then closed her mouth silently. Evidently she'd never thought of it that way. Still, she looked hesitant to accept the justification. "They- they might not have found anyone else. Mama was a part of the experiment. That's why it was me. It couldn't have been someone else."

"Honey, they would've just gotten another woman to be a part of that study. They are the only ones to blame for everything that's happened."

"It's true, El." Both Jane and Joyce jumped at the new voice, and looked around to see everyone else standing there in the doorway, very clearly eavesdropping. Mike took a step forward and continued. "Remember? It's like I told you, you're not the monster. You saved me. You saved all of us."

The group of boys all made their way over towards the two girls. Will took a seat beside Jane and put an arm around her shoulders. "I wouldn't be here without you. I'd be dead in the upside down if not for you."

"Like Barb."

That stopped everyone for a moment before Jonathan spoke up. "Her death wasn't in vain though. Barbara helped to throw the door open at the lab. We got justice for her. It wasn't your fault El. Nancy doesn't blame you either."

Eleven looked around the semi-circle around her. Her mouth opened, then closed, pressing her lips tightly together. Her chin trembled against her will, and she was aware of teardrops welling in her eyes. It felt as though her throat had swollen up, and she wasn't able to get

out any of the words she wanted to say. If she even did have the right words to express herself.

Thankfully, the others appeared able to read her mind. Almost immediately, Hopper and Joyce gathered her in their arms for a tight hug, catching Will in the embrace. Mike leaned in to touch his forehead to hers, and Will squeezed his arm gently across her back. Jonathan hovered back a step, but set his hand on Jane's head in an awkward attempt to be supportive.

Sitting there, surrounded by friends, Eleven realized that she had people who loved her. Loved her for who she was, and not what she was capable of. All of them were there for her. They cared for her, and she cared about them. For the first time in her life, she had a family. A family that forgave her actions, and were standing by her now through her hard times. Despite the guilt still nagging somewhere at the back of her brain, she felt more happy than she had ever thought possible.

It would take a long time for her to fully forgive herself. But El knew that she would have them there the entire time.